

Utah's energy-wise strategy

Researchers list ways to reach Huntsman's goal for efficiency

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Utah's governor last year set a goal for cutting energy use in the state, and a group on Tuesday announced the steps Utahns can undertake to reach it.

The benefits of implementing the 23 recommendations in the Utah Energy Efficiency Strategy, the researchers said, include saving money, saving energy resources and water, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions and greenhouse gases.

"It's something that each of us can do right now and that we can share with others," said Dianne Nielson, energy adviser to Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr.

Huntsman in April 2006 established a goal of increasing energy efficiency in Utah by 20 percent by 2015.

The strategy unveiled Tuesday was prepared by researchers from the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, Utah Clean Energy, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy and the Intermountain CHP Center. Funding was provided by the Energy Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Governor's Office.

The strategy can be accessed at www.utahcleanenergy.org, www.swenergy.org/pubs or www.energy.utah.gov.

The recommendations for new policies and programs touch on virtually all segments of Utah, including utilities, regulators, industry, the public sector and the general public. All 23 options are designed to cut use of electricity, natural gas, gasoline or diesel fuel, which represent 85 percent of the state's energy use, according to Howard Geller, executive director of SWEEP and lead author of the strategy.

Among the options are expanding utility energy efficiency programs, upgrading building energy codes, adopting clean car standards for new cars and light trucks, and using energy pricing to encourage reduced energy demand.

Nielson said implementation would mean "savings for individuals and businesses, with strengthening the diversity and the energy security of the economy in Utah, while still being able to grow an economy and protect our quality of life."

Geller said Utah could see a \$7.1 billion net economic benefit from 2006 to 2015, or an average of \$6,700 per household, by implementing the recommendations. CO2 emissions could fall by more than 10 percent and 3 billion gallons of water per year could be saved, he said.

"Overall, pursuing these options would be a win-win strategy for consumers, for businesses, for the environment," Geller said.

A 20-percent energy-efficiency improvement would equate to a 17 percent reduction in energy use, Geller said. Without the efficiency measures, energy use is expected to rise 2 percent per year. With them, the rise could be cut to about a half-percent annually, he said.

"We're not calling for an actual reduction in energy use in the future, but we're reducing the growth significantly," he said.

Sarah Wright, executive director of Utah Clean Energy and co-author of the report, said Utah has diverse energy resources and the strategy "is a huge step toward the development of our largely untapped energy-efficiency potential."

"Energy efficiency is the quickest, cleanest, cheapest resource we have available to us today to meet our growing energy demand," Wright said. "We can mine it and we can develop it just like we mine and develop our other energy resources in this state."

Researchers described the strategy as "a road map" and "just a first step." Nielson said various stakeholders were involved in the study. Geller noted that utilities, industries and other stakeholder representatives pored over a draft report in May before the final version was released Tuesday.

"I don't think I want to suggest that every single recommendation is supported by every citizen and business in the state, but hopefully we've done a lot to build support, to reflect concerns and address concerns that we heard," Geller said. "And I'm hopeful that there would be broad support for most, if not all, of the policies that we're recommending."

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